

# Grounded in the Way of Truth

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us turn again just for a little to the chapter we read in Genesis chapter 48, Genesis 48. And we read from verse 8, read verses 8 and 9. When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, Who are these?

Joseph said to his father, They are my sons whom God has given me here. And he said, Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.

I think I probably said this before, but the older that I get, the more that I have come to admire this man, Jacob.

When I was younger, I used to think of Jacob as that he was, what we might term a bit of a chancer, that he was a real schemer, that he was this crafty man who was always on the lookout trying to take advantage even of other people in order to better himself.

[ 1 : 12 ] Now, there's no doubt that when Jacob was younger, in the early years, that he was a grabber.

And there were one or two things about him which probably weren't of the best. But, you know, as the years went on in Jacob's life, he was one of these men that simply grew and grew and grew as a Christian.

And there was a developing maturity and a developing submission to God's will so that by the end of his life or in the latter part of his life, there's something remarkable about this man.

Often in the Christian faith, you will see different ways. Sometimes people start very, very brightly and maybe remain bright for quite a number of years.

And then it seems that that brightness seems to maybe fade a little. And for years, the light, that bright light that seemed to shine has sort of dimmed a bit.

[ 2 : 15 ] There are others in the Christian walk and it seems they remain what you would almost say constant. All throughout the years, there's this just steady, constant progression going on.

And then there are others and they seem to be developing and developing and developing all the way through. And that was certainly, now of course, every Christian at one level or another is developing.

But we're talking here about what might be very evident, a marked development. And that certainly was true in the life of Jacob. Now, again, Jacob very much resembles his grandfather because when Abraham was coming to die or when he was realizing that death was approaching, he was so concerned about his family, so concerned that his son Isaac would find a wife.

And he wanted God to guide and God to lead because Abraham was so aware of God's covenant blessings. And so this was at the heart of Abraham as he was nearing the end, that he as the recipient of God's great blessings, that these blessings would carry on through his seed.

But when you look at Isaac, good man and although he was, when he was nearing or he thought he was nearing the end, and he was also wanting to bless, we find that Isaac seemed to be more concerned about his stomach.

[ 3 : 52 ] Yes, he was going to give the blessings after, but he wanted his favorite meal. And he was going to bless his way by giving the blessing to his favorite son. Again, a great mistake to have favorites within a family.

But Isaac obviously had. And he was going to bless Esau, even though the promise had been for Jacob that God was going to bless the younger rather than the elder.

And so, although good man and although Isaac was, we do not see him having that burning, as it were, faith and commitment and that great sense of covenantal blessing at the same level as maybe Abraham.

And then again that Jacob shows. Because Jacob is again showing the same kind of attitude and the same kind of spirit as his grandfather Abraham when he realizes he's coming to die.

Now, as we find here in this chapter, Jacob is coming to the end of his days. Now, in the previous chapter, if we had read there, we would find that Jacob sends for Joseph.

[ 5 : 02 ] And he tells Joseph, reminding Joseph of certain things, and he makes preparation for his funeral and for his burial.

But in this particular chapter, Joseph gets word that his father has taken ill. And he realizes that his father is going to die.

So he takes his two sons with him, Manasseh and Ephraim, and he goes to see his father. Now, I suppose some people are wondering why Joseph wasn't spending more time with his father.

But we've got to remember that Joseph, he was prime minister of the land, second only to Pharaoh. And Joseph, of course, his life was very much lived with royalty, lived with the aristocracy, lived in the court and the palace.

But Joseph also had to be very careful because his brothers and the families were given Goshen, which was really the best part of the land.

[ 6 : 05 ] It was so fertile. And Joseph had to be careful not to arouse any jealousies because if he was seen spending all his time with his own family, with his own father, it would no doubt begin to start jealousy.

So he's going to have to be very careful about how he dealt with things. Anyway, Joseph gets word that his father is ill and is dying, and so he makes his way with his two sons.

And when Jacob discovers that Joseph has arrived with his two sons, with all his remaining strength, he pulls his frail body up in the bed and it would be to the side of the bed in order to speak with Joseph and to bless Joseph and the sons.

Now it is interesting, as we were reading here, you will find that the writer Moses, who was writing, how he changes from Jacob to Israel.

Remember, Jacob had two names. Jacob and Israel. Jacob the worm. Jacob the very, very human. Jacob the worm. Remember, we read about that in Isaiah.

[ 7 : 16 ] Oh, worm Jacob. But Israel, you remember, on the other hand, is a prince having power with God and prevailing.

You remember how Jacob wrestled all night in prayer. Remember how he wrestled with the angel and at the end he was told that he was a prince.

God revealing to Jacob. And so his name was changed to Israel. This mighty man, this prince with God.

And so we have the Jacob and the Israel. We have the interchanging. And it's interesting how here's Jacob, the old Jacob, 147 year old, 147 years old, old Jacob and he's nearing death.

And then he becomes Israel, this mighty man of faith, seeing this vision that he has of God and God's covenantal blessings. And so the old, frail Jacob gives way to this mighty prince who has power prevailing with God.

[ 8 : 23 ] And so we see that he's the twofold, the Jacob and the Israel. And so this great man of faith, as we see with all his remaining strength, pulls himself up to bless his son and his grandsons.

And so we find Joseph, he comes in with the two sons. And we find Jacob saying to Joseph, now who are these? And as we read, Jacob's eyes were now dim, so he would only be seeing shadows. And I'm quite sure, as Jacob came to bless his son and his grandsons, and there he is, blind, virtually blind, that he couldn't help but put his mind back because Jacob's mind, we know today that so many people are losing their memories.

But we don't seem to find that in the Bible. that we often find, certainly in these times, that they had a lot of these people that are mind, and we still find that sometimes, people up to an old, old age, and that mind is as alert and as fertile as ever.

Well, it certainly was in Jacob's case. And I'm sure that Jacob couldn't help thinking back, turning back the clock, and remembering another picture of an old, blind father.

[ 9 : 46 ] And he was the one who was stealing in, remember. Kidding on, he was his brother. Having put on the animal fur to make himself hairy like his brother was.

And trying to disguise his voice and trying to pretend that he was his brother easy. And I'm sure that that thought would have gone through Jacob's mind at that particular moment.

Anyway, as Jacob begins to speak, he's reminding Joseph of God's covenantal dealings with him and of God's great promises regarding the land of Canaan.

And Jacob is deliberately doing this because Jacob is aware that his family, that all his sons and their wives and their families and their grandchildren, they're settling down really well in the land because it's a great land.

They're in the most fertile part. And I'm sure Jacob has this worry. What if they don't want to go back to Canaan? What if they want to stay here?

[10:52] And so he's bringing before Joseph and before Joseph's boys, look, you are people of the covenant. God is a special place and a special work for you.

And he has set you a land, the land of Canaan. You have to go back there. And so Jacob is focusing Joseph's sons' minds upon the privileges, upon the opportunities and upon the responsibilities that they have.

And it's very important that Jacob did this because we know that these boys, their mother was an Egyptian and there was no doubt but that the culture, the philosophy, the education, the lifestyle of the land would be very much part of the lifestyle that they were living in.

So there was going to be this great conflict growing up. On the one hand there was going to be their father's influence and their grandfather's influence which was the way of the Lord and then there was going to be the Egyptian influence.

And so Jacob, this is what's burning in the old man's heart. It's got to be God's way. This is what we've got to set before them.

[12:13] Now we knew that Joseph, despite the fact that he lived in Egypt and mingled in Egypt and lived in the royal circles and was integrated into Egypt, was still a man of faith.

A man who loved God and worshipped God. So Jacob is setting out before Joseph and before the boys how it is. And that's really important for us to emphasize and particularly a day like this because sometimes we can be guilty of getting it wrong because we look at the world and we see this world with all its power, with all its opportunities, with all its fame, with all its glory, with all its riches.

And sometimes we say to ourselves, well, this is what we've got to have. Now I'm not saying, not in any wise are we saying that it is wrong. Of course, it is good.

It's not only it's not wrong, but it is good to strive in this world to do our best. In whatever work we're in, when we're in school, we should seek to do our best.

When we go to work, we ought to do our best. If we're parents, we should do all we can to provide for our families. In all these things, these are things that God sets out before us and we are to use these things and we are to do all that we can.

[13:41] And that is right. That's how it should be. But not at the neglect of our soul. Because that is first and foremost.

And that was Jacob's burning passion. He realized that these boys were boys who were born, you know, they're saying with a silver spoon in their mouth.

These were boys who could really get whatever they wanted. They had the riches. They had the favors. They had the world at their feet. But Jacob was concerned that they would have the Lord in their heart.

That to him was far more important. And that is why we also have got to realize that it is so important that our young people are grounded in the way of truth.

because you see while the world offers much and the world gives much we've got to remember that whatever good we receive in this world that ultimately it's God who gives it to us.

[14:47] There's a question asked in the Bible what do you have that you did not receive? And I think sometimes it's good for us to stop and reflect on life because everything that we got or we have received in this world has ultimately been given to us by God.

You may say to you, oh no, it's my ability. It was through my ability through my sheer hard work that I got where I got. Who gave you the abilities?

Who gave you the strength to work hard? It's God. when we strip everything down and take it back to its primary source everything is of God and comes from God and we've got to remember that.

And that is why God is always looking to us for our thankfulness for what we have. That was why when Israel we've said this often enough before when Israel were going into the land of promise God kept emphasizing to them listen when you get in there and you begin to prosper and you build

beautiful houses and your corn multiplies and you have loads of wine and loads of cattle and loads of sheep and loads of silver when all these things multiply beware the Lord says that you forget not the Lord your God because it is God who gives you the ability to get these things.

So let's remember that it's always of God and that's one of the things I believe that Jacob is reminding his sons here look it's all about God your life there everywhere you turn you're seeing glory and power and riches and everything it's all of God and remember also that the Lord gives us in this life in himself riches that this world cannot give because you know the riches and whatever the world gives in this world it's only for a short time it's only on loan but when the Lord gives he gives himself and when he gives himself to a person he gives when we receive the Lord we receive his love we receive his joy we receive his peace we receive his gentleness we receive all these things because this is himself and the Holy Spirit is working these things within our heart these are riches that people would give anything to get they cannot be purchased you cannot go to a shop and go in and buy a bottle of love or a packet of peace if you could people would because that's what they want in life but Jesus says

[17:41] I give you these things in giving myself and if you today my dear friend have a hunger in your heart an emptiness in your life that this world is never satisfied you've gone down different roads you've tried different things for a wee while you might have had a kick here and a kick there and things have interested you things have filled you for a wee while but there's always something missing something missing well you know there always will be until you find the Lord because we're not just made body and mind but we're soul as well we have a spiritual nature and unless we deal with that there will always be something missing and that is why we have to come to find Jesus as our own saviour and that is why Jacob was so concerned for these boys and that is why he's holding up before them at this time the importance the importance of finding and having the Lord and the importance of God's place for their life and the future that God had for them now today when we come here as a morning a baptismal morning it's important that when we look at our children and think of our children that we get the balance right as we said yes we want the best for them but let's remember that the best involves setting out the way of the Lord before them that is what is so important that our the young minds and may I stress to the parents today who are going to take baptism just the baptismal vows and a little that you stand today with so many privileges so many opportunities but yet so many responsibilities you know you don't get a second shot many a parent when their children have grown up and gone say

I wish I could put the clock back I wish I could get another shot at it I wish I had another opportunity because I would have done things differently well we need to ask for God's blessing and God's grace and God's guidance as we seek to bring our children up and to bring them up in the way of the Lord make sure that you feed their young minds with the truth because remember in this world it's a world that is opposed to the gospel the world doesn't like Christianity the world doesn't like the gospel and there will be so many forces and so many powers opposed to Christian teaching and that is why you know some people say I'm not going to do anything with my children I'm going to allow them to grow up the way they want I want them to grow up and if when they're older they decide well the Christian faith that looks a good thing well good and well but I don't want to start influencing them it's too late then unless God and his sovereignty will change things what an opportunity of grounding them in the way of the Lord the God who has given the gift of children surely we should seek to bring them up in the way of the Lord and then you say to yourself well how is that well to put it very practically and the most simple things is pray for your children pray with your children teach them to pray when we read

Bible stories that's why the Kirk session give a Bible story book to all the families who have baptism so that you get into the habit when they're young of reading Bible stories to them when they're old enough that they themselves will get into the habit of reading these things and eventually reading God's word so that every day make sure that they speak to the Lord that's what we do in prayer and that we hear God speak to us that's what happens when we read his word two way that's how conversation is two way you speak somebody else speaks back that's the way conversation works and that's how it is you speaking to the Lord the Lord speaking to you through his word bring your children to God's house don't send them bring them children are great imitators but you know children children are probably the shrewdest of all because they know when something is real or it's not and if they see that church is just something that you've got to go through if they see their parents saying oh man

Sunday I suppose we better go to church it won't be long until that kind of attitude will rub off on them and they too will be saying oh church we've got to seek to make church a positive experience and that will happen when they see that the word of God means so much to you that this is life this is where life is and it's to be found and the wonderful thing is that God will honour the faithful instruction the faithful teaching the faithful living as we seek to bring up our children we'll never get it right we'll never get it absolutely right there's no parent who will ever turn around and say you know I brought up my children perfectly don't think anyone will ever say that I think we're all too aware of mistakes and shortcomings getting things wrong but if it's our hearts desire that they be brought up in the way of the Lord then I believe that the Lord will help us and guide us and teach us in these very things let us pray

Lord our God we ask thee to bless us this day and we thank thee for God's word and we pray that as we come round today that our ears may be open to it that these truths will burn into our heart bless us and do us good and take away sin for Jesus sake Amen we'll sing now